

on cooperatively with our staffs over the last several months. We think we have an excellent agreement that will reform the foster care system of our country, stop us from warehousing children, move them into adoption, and grant them an opportunity for a permanent and loving home. We hope that can move before we adjourn this 1st session of the 105th Congress.

Mr. President, with all of the other considerations, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREE- MENT—CONFERENCE REPORT AC- COMPANYING H.R. 2264

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 1 p.m. today, the Senate begin consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2264, the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. I further ask unanimous consent that there be 90 minutes for debate, equally divided between the chairman and the ranking member. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that at the expiration or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on the adoption of the conference report, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 1 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I would like to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

#### NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to take the time that we have available this morning while we are waiting for these important closing activities—I hope closing activities—to talk a little bit about an issue that I feel very strongly about and that I think most people do, and that is our national parks and our national parks plan.

I am chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, and we have spent almost this entire year working on a program to help strengthen the parks. Certainly, the National Park System is truly one of our treasures.

The Park System is the custodian of some of America's most important nat-

ural and cultural resources and provides, of course, a legacy for our children and our grandchildren.

The Park System today consists of about 374 units which are visited annually by millions of people. They stretch all the way from Acadia in Maine to American Samoa in the Pacific islands and provide a unique opportunity.

I, of course, am particularly selfishly interested in parks because I come from Wyoming. We have the first national park which recently celebrated its 125th anniversary—Yellowstone. We also of course have Teton Park. But the whole country has a park system that we are extremely proud of.

Unfortunately, that System is and has been under considerable stress. At the time that we have showed unusual interest in it as Americans, and have increased our visitations, the park has had increasing difficulties. We are believed to have somewhere near \$8 billion in unfunded and unrealized infrastructure repairs of various kinds. That is a great deal of money.

We also have had some stress in terms of management in many of those things. So we worked this year and intend, as a matter of fact, to have some field hearings in November; particularly we have one set for Denver and one for San Francisco, and we hope then to have one later in Florida near the Everglades, to try and bring in as much information as we can get on the issues and how they affect people.

The issues are broken down, as you might imagine, into several categories. One of them is finance. That is one of the basic ones, of course. As I mentioned, we have an overwhelming amount of unfunded programs: \$2.2 billion in road and bridge repair; \$1.5 billion in buildings and maintenance; \$800 million in natural resource management kinds of things. They are the kinds of things that are very difficult to manage in an annual budget.

So we are looking for some ways to do this a little bit differently. We are looking at a number of things. One would be to extend the temporary program for fees, where fees have been raised in a number of the parks, about 100 I think out of the 375 parks. They have been very low. And it has been \$10 a car at Yellowstone for a whole carload of people for a week. I think it has now gone to \$20. And, frankly, we found very little resistance to that, particularly if people believe the money they are spending going to that park will be used to make that park a better place to visit.

In addition to fees, of course, it will be our responsibility, Mr. President, as Members of Congress, to keep the appropriations growing some for that. We had an increase in appropriations this year. We need to continue to do that.

In addition to entrance fees, we are looking at ways for people to contribute, private individuals to contribute to parks. Many want to do that. There are park foundations in individual parks. We need to find some

ways for Americans who chose to, to be able to contribute more to the maintenance of parks.

We are also looking at a way for corporate investment as well, without commercializing parks. We do not want "Pepsi-Cola" painted up on the wall of Yosemite. But there isn't any reason why there cannot be corporate donations made. For example, one of the corporations made a donation to build the walkway around Old Faithful. It is a wonderful addition. And there is a very small and unobtrusive sign there that indicates the sponsors of that. I think that is a good idea. I think we can continue to do that.

One of the things we are looking at is a way for bonding. Interestingly enough, the larger parks, like Yosemite, like Yellowstone are basically small cities. They have to have sewers, they have to have streets, they have to have housing, the kinds of things that take long-term investment. And it is very difficult to do it, as I mentioned a moment ago, out of annual appropriations.

So we are trying to find a way that the park could do some bonding in the private sector. I do not know whether these can be Government bonds, I do not know whether they can be tax-free bonds or taxable bonds. But in order to do that, we have a couple of problems I hope we can overcome.

One is the scoring system here in the budget of the United States. As you know, we do not have a capital budget. And so if you issue 300 million dollars' worth of bonds, that would all go into the annual budget. That is a difficult thing. We will have to try and overcome that. We hope that there are some ways to do it.

The other thing, of course, that is necessary to do bonding is to have a dependable and steady stream of revenue to pay off the bonds. We think we can do that. So those are a couple of the ways that we are seeking to do some things that would be good for parks.

In addition, many of the larger parks, as you know, the services—let me go back and say, I think most people would agree that the main purpose of a park is to maintain the resources, whether it be cultural or whether it be natural resources.

But the second and equally important part of it is to have a pleasant visit for Americans, who own those parks. To do that, by and large, we have had concessions that have been run by the private sector. I certainly support that idea. I think that is the way to do it. We have, unfortunately, kind of gotten out of sync in terms of doing the sort of contracting that is necessary.

We went through a while, a big debate a couple years ago as to whether the Government ought to own the facilities. I think we have overcome that and decided that is not what we want to do. So we need to go back to longer term contracts for some very large facilities.